



MISS VIOLET AND HER FRIENDS.



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MISS VIOLET.

—
BY NORA PERRY.
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“OH, mother dear, you will, you must let me go!”

“I don’t see how I can, Mary. In the first place, I don’t approve of your visiting where you will get such high notions in your head as you will be sure to get at Mrs. Van Voorst’s; and, in the second place, you have nothing suitable to wear at such a place. Oh, Mary, don’t tease me; I don’t want you to go, for I know it will be bad for you in the end. You will get accustomed to a life that is just as much separated from yours as the Queen of England’s, and when you come back you will be discontented and pining for what you have left behind.”

“Mother, it is Violet Van Voorst herself that I want to visit a great deal more than anything else, though I shall enjoy beautiful Newport, too. And it’s so kind of her mother to wish to give me this pleasure; and she wants me, too, not merely out of kindness but because she loves me.”

Mrs. Harwood knitted her brows slightly. She had seen a good deal of trouble, and perhaps that was the reason she had for looking down on school-girl friendships.

“If Miss Violet Van Voorst loves you so much, *why* didn’t she come oftener to see you when she was at school here?” she asked her daughter pres-

ently, and a little bitterly, perhaps.

“Mother, you always discouraged my bringing her home with me after that once, you know,” answered Mary Harwood a little shyly.

“Well, I dare say I did, Mary; for that once, as you call it, was rather an unfortunate visit. There was nothing in the world for tea but cold bread and butter and cookies, and I remember that the boys had come in and flung all their fishing-tackle in the front entry.”

“But Violet was so pleased with everything, mother. You know how she praised your bread, and that delicious butter of ours, and how she apologized for eating so many cookies; and when you spoke of the boys’ fishing-tackle she laughed, and said it was just like *her* brothers.”

“Oh, your Miss Violet knows how to say polite things, Mary; but, all the same, I shouldn’t care to be patronized by a fashionable young lady,” returned Mrs. Harwood laughing a little, but quite in earnest.

Mary did not reply. It was of no use she said to herself, for mother did not understand Violet, and would be sure to think she did the wrong thing. After this conversation she was no little surprised the next morning to hear her mother say:

“Mary, I have thought that perhaps I am not do-

ing right by keeping you from visiting Violet Van Voorst. You are sixteen, now, and ought to face things for yourself, I dare say, and to see all sides. I didn't mean to be hard last night ; but I don't like fashionable life and its follies, and I hated to think of my sensible Molly being hurt by them. But I have come to think if you want to go so much, child, perhaps it is better that you should, else you may think all your life that your cross, old mamsey has made you miss what you can never make up."



MRS. HARWOOD CONSENTS.

"O, mamsey darling, you're never cross. I *know* you are always thinking of my good, and this—O, mammy—this is so just and kind of you !"

The mother and daughter kissed each other, and then the happy Molly flew off to commence her little preparations for her visit to lovely Newport and Violet Van Voorst. But, first of all, she must write to her friend that her kind invitation was accepted, and what day and hour she might expect her.

When Miss Violet received this letter she was standing on the lawn of her summer home at Newport, waiting for her pony-phaeton, and chatting to a

very handsome young girl about her own age.

"A letter for you, Miss Violet," said a groom, doffing his hat as he handed out Molly Harwood's neat little missive.

Violet tore open the envelope and glanced rapidly down the page.

"Oh, she is coming ! I was so afraid that she wouldn't," she exclaimed joyfully after this glance.

"Who's coming, if I may ask, Vy ?" inquired Miss Margie Dearborn.

"Mary Harwood, a dear girl I knew when I was at Sherwood School. She was a day scholar, and used to walk over from Hollingsford, a distance of three miles, every morning, and back at night."

"Why did she do that ? For her health ?"

"Because they had no horses or carriages, Miss Margie."

"Oh ! I thought all the people who lived in the country had horses, or at least one horse, Vy," commented Miss Margie rather wonderingly.

"All farmers do, I suppose, but Mary Harwood was not a farmer's daughter. Her father was dead, and she and her mother and little brothers lived in a little country town — Hollingsford, three miles from Sherwood. They were not rich people at all. I sometimes used to think they might be quite poor ; but Mary was so nice, the nicest girl in school. I want you to call upon her when she is here, Margie, and be very sweet to her."

Margie nodded her head carelessly, with a pleasant "of course" to her friend's request, and the next moment the two girls were bowling along the avenue in the pretty basket phaeton, Violet holding the reins with a practised hand.

Three hours later, as the Providence boat steamed up to the Newport wharf, Mary Harwood, looking anxiously from the forward deck, saw the basket phaeton and its pretty owner, with the natty little groom in the little back seat — or, properly speaking, *the rumble* of the carriage. All the way in the cars and in the boat, Mary had been anticipating this meeting with her friend with unalloyed pleasure ; now, as she caught sight of the stylish turnout, with the glittering, many-buttoned little groom perched on guard as it were, there flashed over her, involuntarily, all the things her mother had said in regard to the difference in her life and that of this lovely Miss Violet. One thing specially came to her — almost the last thing her mother had said to her :

"You mustn't expect, Mary, that a girl situated

like Violet Van Voorst will *continue* to feel the interest in you that she does now. You are new and fresh to her just now, but when she is fully launched in the gay world where she belongs, you must make up your mind to lose her."

When Mrs. Harwood had said this Mary had resolutely refused to believe it, though she spoke not a word to her mother of her rebellious state of mind. But now, in sight of Violet, transformed into such a gay little princess, sitting there as if upon a little throne with her body-guard, her mother's warning words came back upon her with a cold chill, and not even the princess's bright face and warm kiss of welcome could quite restore her old feeling of trust and happiness.

And it was this feeling that, like a vague shadow, seemed to be perpetually looking over her shoulder, and clouding the sunshine all through the first days of her visit. In these days her letters to her mother were mostly made up of descriptions of Newport—the cliffs, the glen, the famous old fort, and the rest of the fascinations of the historic old town.

And Mrs. Harwood, reading these letters and observing how little was said of her "dear Violet," and the Van Voorst family, commented to herself in this style, after her critical, suspicious fashion :

"Poor little Molly! it's just as I knew it would be. She's finding out that when fashionable people are in their own world, they don't need simple little folk like her, who have no fine feathers, to reflect credit upon them. It is as well, perhaps, that she should learn this early, but I do hope they won't make her unhappy."

But while Mrs. Harwood was making up her mind to these dismal conclusions, Mary was learning quite another lesson than her mother supposed, and on the third week of her visit, just a week after the third of the series of letters which had convinced Mrs. Harwood that her prophecies were being fulfilled, the good lady was astonished by the receipt of the following :

"DEAR MOTHER : I have waited until now before I said anything about Violet herself and the home-life here, for I wanted to be *certain sure*—as I used to say when I was a little girl—of the reality before I gave my opinion or criticism; for you know you were always warning me not to jump at conclusions in my enthusiasm.

"Well now, dear mamsey, I am going to begin at

the very beginning and tell you everything. Violet met me as I told you at the boat. But as I have *not* told you, suddenly, when I first caught sight of her sitting in that elegant little phaeton, with the sleek pony all a-glitter in the silver-mounted harness, and the smart groom perched up in the rumble, glittering like the pony, and Violet holding the long white reins in her long, white driving-gloves, it all came over me like a flash what you had said about the difference in our lives as it never had before, and there in the warm sunshine I felt as if a shadow had settled down upon me which would never lift; for I felt as if you had guessed it all right—that Violet in her own world *could* not care for me as she had in dear old Sherwood, and I should find it out in a thousand ways.

"Even when the dear, pretty creature seized me and kissed me so affectionately a moment afterwards, I couldn't put aside my misgivings. I kept thinking, 'Oh, if this is only the first glimpse of all the splendor what will the rest be, and what can a girl who lives in fairy-land want of a little plain country-girl like me?'

"Well, up from the boat we drove through the narrowest, queerest old street, right past a house where George Washington had his headquarters a hundred years ago, and crossing through still another narrow, old street we came to Bellevue avenue, and were presently at Violet's home. I've told you before, mamsey, how beautiful it all was, with its velvet lawn, and its piazzas and long windows, and lovely furniture, partly of silk and partly of that exquisite Wakefield rattan manufacture. But I haven't told you yet how as we went in and Violet's mother, whom Violet always calls 'mamma,' who was just then coming along the hall, stopped and put out her pretty, slim hand to me, and said she was pleased to see me and hoped I had a pleasant journey; and how *then* she seemed so pleasantly indifferent to me and to Violet, too, as if it was a nice, polite, little speech she might have said to anybody she had never heard of.

"And then directly after we had dinner in a great dining-room, with Florentine mosaics on the wall, and what seemed to me then a crowd of company. It was in reality an aunt and uncle of Violet's who are staying here, and two other ladies and one gentleman who had been invited for that day. Of course they were all older than Violet and I, and so, of course, they talked of things that were of interest

to themselves and that we didn't know about, or that I didn't at least. Well, like a foolish girl, I felt this, because it was so different from Sherwood ways where we girls were all in all; or at Hollingsford where the young people are of so much consequence. Violet didn't seem to mind it, however, and talked to me in her old way in an undertone.

"So things went on from day to day, Mrs Van Voorst, who is a very elegant and accomplished woman, going into society and entertaining at her



AT THE VAN VOORST'S.

own house not only fashionable but people distinguished in different ways. I don't know what I thought, but I suppose I expected to be taken notice of by these people, just as I used to be at Hollingsford by Dr. Ryder and Professor Roy. But nothing of the kind occurred. They would speak to us pleasantly, now and then, and now and then Violet would chat a little with one of them, but we were really treated a good deal like nice children; and I, who had been used to 'speaking' up to everybody, and giving my opinion upon everything, from Tennyson's

poems to the latest theological discussions, and to think it very smart to do so, felt very much astonished that I was of no more importance, and I began to have, by-and-by, a sober feeling that all this neglect was because of my being a little country girl, with no fine relations and no money.

"During this time several of Violet's friends had been to see me — young girls like ourselves — but I didn't feel at ease with them, for the reason that I had been cherishing a suspicious spirit ever since my arrival.

"Well, to come now to the grand point. Last Wednesday, a week ago, Violet gave a lawn party. Stretching back of the house there is a beautiful great lawn, which is in full view of the sea, and on this various pretty tents were put up, croquet hoops set, and all kinds of lovely arrangements. It was a day party, of course, and I wore my white dress with pink ribbons, and rosebuds from the greenhouse which Violet brought to me. Then I took the black velvet off of my white straw hat, and plaited that old white lace scarf that you gave me about the crown, and twisted up the ends with a knot of roses and pink ribbon. Violet was delighted with the effect, and I think, mamsey, I did look very well.

"And I felt pretty well, too, and had a very nice time until Margie Dearborn, Violet's next-door neighbor here, started a new game or play, which somebody brought from abroad recently, called 'The Ambassador.' I won't explain it in detail now, but will just say that one has to know something of geography and French to answer the questions and be a successful player. Well, though I can read French quite well you know I can't speak it, and geography is one of my weak points.

"Foolishly enough I had allowed Margie Dearborn, the week before, to think I was a very fine linguist. She had found me reading a French newspaper, and something she said, I've forgotten what, irritated me in my suspicious mood, and I replied, 'I shouldn't think I knew much if I didn't understand French. It's a great deal easier than the English language,' which is true, of course, in one way; but Margie thought I meant it in quite a different way — that of being complete mistress of it.

"Well, we went on swimmingly in 'The Ambassador' until I had to pay a forfeit. Then I was sent to France as the Spanish ambassador. 'From what country do you come?' I was asked. Then, 'What is the capital?'

"And, O, mamsey! I answered '*Granada*.'

"Only think of it; and there was Mrs. Van Voorst and her sister and two or three other ladies looking on.

"The next thing, I was addressed in French and expected to answer in that language. Simple phrases enough; for all these girls talk French very readily, because they have had French *bonnes* or nurses, and most of their mothers have French maids, and have lived abroad some time. But I couldn't answer a word, for I couldn't understand them, and forgot what little I did know.

"Oh, mamsey! I thought I should sink through the ground with mortification as I caught Margie Dearborn's eye, and as I faced all of them so stupidly — I, Violet's friend, of whom she had talked so admiringly, as I knew she had!

"And just then when a great wave of color was blazing into my cheeks, Violet came forward and said softly, 'The Spanish ambassador has not been to France before, and he cannot understand our rapid careless French though he can read it better than we can.'

"And then mamsey — then what do you think Mrs. Van Voorst whom I thought such an indifferent fine lady, did? — she rose and came forward and said sweetly, 'And I must break up the court at once, and take the Spanish ambassador and all the rest of this fine company to the banquet that is served for them,' and she slid my hand over her arm and smiled down upon me like an angel of goodness. And she took us the whole length of the garden, mamsey, to give time for one of the men to whom she spoke to hurry up the supper — for it wasn't nearly ready, though she had pretended that it was just out of pure kindness to save me from any further mortification. And when supper was really served in the big tent, all the girls followed her example and were just as pleasant and kind to me as possible.

"Afterwards when I was alone with Violet, I thanked her for her sweetness and told her how much I appreciated her mother's kindness to me, and

I confessed to a good deal of my own foolish feeling too. And Violet, mamsey, looked at me in amazement, and said to me, 'Oh, Molly, don't praise me, for trying to retrieve my great blunder.'

"I asked her what she meant, and then she told me that she ought not to have allowed 'The Ambassador' to be played, because she knew that I couldn't *spea*k French fluently, but that she forgot for the moment. 'And mamma was so displeased with me,' she went on eagerly — 'she said that she wouldn't have thought I could have been guilty of such a rudeness to my guests, as to allow a game to be played in which they might be mortified.'

"Oh, Mamsey, doesn't this prove how much in the wrong I have been in my suspicious judgments? There are, of course, people in high position who are not ladies or gentlemen, but the Van Voorsts are not of this kind. They are "real people" Mamsey, who believe in the best things; and it needed just this experience to show me what they were, and to remove the little scales of prejudice from my eyes, that I might see that under all the smooth, elegant surface which I thought lacked our country heartiness, there was really the most delicate courtesy. I thought sharply, the Hollingsford girls would have joked and teased any one, placed as I was — their own fault, partly, too. I can see very plainly that these little ceremonies and fine manners, which at first seemed to keep me at a distance, are really helps oftentimes to the real, polite feeling towards others.

"Mamsey dear, I am coming home to you next week, with not a bit of envy for all this new life, but with a new idea for the old life, for which I shall always be better, as I shall always be your loving
MOLLY,"

When Mrs. Harwood came to the end of this long letter, there were tears in her eyes. She spoke softly: "The child is right, she will always be the better for this experience; and so shall I, for I shan't make up my mind quite so hastily again about the 'other side.'"